

Event Report



Grand Re-opening of the Hand Fan Museum *Philip Gust**

A museum dedicated to collecting and displaying vintage and modern hand fans re-opens in a new space, with a new exhibit.

The Hand Fan Museum kicked off its grand reopening with a gala reception on November 7, 2010. The museum is located in the picturesque wine country town of Healdsburg California, an hour north of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Members of local and regional chapters of the *Fan Association of North America*, as well as some who traveled from as far as the East Coast, gathered to celebrate the new



Museum founder Pamela Sher (right) welcomes guests on opening night. Photo by Scott Keeley.



2010 American Fan Collector of the Year Gina Hook.

location. Museum founder Pamela Sher, director Liz Keeley, and many members of the museum's board of directors were on hand to greet guests.

Although much larger than their previous space several blocks away, the museum was filled to capacity that evening with fan collectors, enjoying local wines and hors d'oeuvres, and viewing an exhibit of over one hundred fans from the collection of East Bay Fan Guild member Gina Hook. Gina was honored with this exhibition as the 2010 American Fan Collector of the Year.

About the Hand Fan Museum

The Hand Fan Museum is a not-for-profit corporation that provides educational and cultural enrichment to the public by utilizing the hand fan as a vehicle for teaching history, art and geography. This is the first museum in the United States dedicated solely to hand fans. The museum displays fans from its own collection, as

well as rotating exhibits, that tell the stories of cultures and individuals who used them.

Over 3,000 fans are in the museum's permanent collection, as well as supporting material such as books, articles, images, and advertising art. Fans in the collection go back to the early 1700s, through the Regency, the Victorian and Edwardian periods, and up to the current era. They include not only vintage fans from all over the world, but also specialty fans featuring such things as advertising art.

In addition to exhibits, the museum produces publications, lectures, and a school arts program that began in 2003. The school program includes field trips to the Museum, followed by visits to the classroom, where students decorate their own blank paper fans with ink and watercolors. For example, one school program focuses on Revolutionary War era fans. Over 2000 students have enjoyed this approach to fan education.



Museum director Liz Keeley at a school program.



Side wall display; hanging Japanese [ranma](#) with fan motif.



Overview from entry. Photo by Scott Keeley



Framed fans on back wall of museum

About the Exhibit

The museum was open the morning after the reception, prior to a luncheon honoring Gina Hook, and provided a better view of the space and the exhibit. It included fans from the late 18th century to the early 20th century. Here are just a few of the items from the exhibit. You really have to see them all up close to appreciate their delicate detail and beauty. Buying the exhibit book is well worthwhile.



European, c.1880s-1890s. Dyed mother of pearl [brisé](#).



One of two cases displaying fans.



Art Nouveau fan c. 1900. Silk, painted figures, ivory sticks.



French [brisé](#) fan, 1865. Painted over ivory sticks.



Cockade fan, 1800s. Painted silk, ivory handle.



Art Nouveau c.1890. Black silk with painted dragonfly.



Mesh leaf fan, 1865. Spangle and sequin sunflowers.

For those who wondered, a universal “language of the fan” is a myth. Board member Cynthia Fendel has written that it was promoted by fan makers to increase sales; they included instructions with each fan. Versions with different signals, made it hard for potential beaux to understand without reading the same instructions.

At some point, the museum would like to make images of its material available on the web. This would allow fan collectors and costumers to access the museum's extensive resources for research without traveling to Northern California. On the other hand, a visit to this beautiful museum is something that should be on every costumer's to-do list.

The [Hand Fan Museum](#) is open Wed. through Sun., 11am - 4pm. Contact them in advance if you plan to visit, since they sometimes close on rainy days. Admission is free, but donations are gratefully accepted.

Philip Gust enjoys sci-fi and fantasy costuming, and has particular interests in props, special effects, and prosthetic makeup. He also costumes in historical periods, including Regency, Victorian, and early 20th C.



French, c.1830. Paper, painted scene, mother of pearl.



Man's fan, 1800s. Brown silk, alligator skin handles.



Chinese export fan, c 1840. Painted paper, ivory sticks.



Europe c.1900. Woven ribbon over gauze. wood sticks.